



Your Kingdom Come

God's Heart for Justice

Biblical Texts

Matthew 25:31-40, Isaiah 1:17

Introduction

For many of us, there are defining moments in our life when we are set on a new path and paradigm in which we understand the world and our place in it. It could be our wedding day, our graduation, the birth of our child, birth of our grandchildren or moving home to a new city for work. Whatever the circumstance is, those defining moments change us. We are transformed.

Take a moment, before opening the passage in Matthew 25, to share about a moment from your own life that was of deep significance that changed your life's course. Share a story or a personal experience that helps explore the theme of being given a new paradigm and narrative in which to live.

1. God defends the poor

In Isaiah 1:17 we read these words, *“Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.”* (NIV) Located throughout Scripture, not just in Isaiah, we read about a God who defends the poor, who defends the orphan and the alien. But we need to have a working definition of the term ‘poor’. While we could argue that the poor refers to those who are pious in their seeking after God, many scholars suggest that the term ‘poor’ refers to a particular people group who experience real suffering and experience the threat of everyday violence and are helpless to do anything about it. That is our working definition of the poor – those who suffer, who are vulnerable and have no one to plead their case.

Challenge those listening to carefully consider those whom are poor in their own community or city. If we follow a God that defends the poor, the oppressed and the vulnerable, how does this understanding impact our life?

2. Jesus locates himself with the poor

The passage we find in Matthew 25:31-40 is remarkable in its content, for it is here that Jesus chooses to locate himself centrally with the lives of the poor. As Jesus lived out the values of the Kingdom that he had preached earlier in the Gospel, he turns our expectations of the Kingdom upside down. Jesus does not overstate the fact that if we choose to clothe the poor, if we choose to quench the thirst of the poor we are in fact, through a beautiful mystery, serving him. This is a

game-changer! We are forced then to acknowledge the fact that Jesus is with the poor. Jesus is in their midst that he stand with and alongside them. That means he knows the stories and names of the near 36 million children, women and men who are currently enslaved in this world. That means he knows the stories and names of the 4 billion of the world's poor who live outside the protection of the law.

Consider sharing [Juliana's Story](#) found on our blog or show the video of [Grace's Story](#).

3. God's Kingdom – Good News to the poor.

In a world that is torn apart through war, ravaged by famine and disease and afflicted with scourge of slavery and exploitation, what hope is there for the poor? It is easy to feel burdened and weighed down by the apparent hopelessness that fills the airwaves and the media outlets. Yet, as followers of Jesus, followers of the one who chooses to clothe himself with the poor, we are to fix our eyes on the hope of the Kingdom that is here and yet to come.

In Isaiah 61:1 we read these words: *“The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners.”* The Good News that you and I are to preach is not one of empty promises, but rather, filled with the certain hope of the Kingdom where the poor will experience, liberty, dignity, justice, peace and freedom. At IJM we are seeing glimpses of the Kingdom, all the time. Where the values of the Kingdom are being displayed where those who have suffered violent oppression are now rescued and restored. This, and the amazing change we are seeing in Cambodia is evidence that God's Kingdom of light, mercy justice and peace will have the final word.

Perhaps show the video entitled [Transformation: Cambodia](#) which highlights the success of IJM's fight against sex trafficking.

